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SUBJECT: COMBATING EXTREMISM - MISSION INDIA RESPONSE

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[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 7469

[1](#)C. NEW DELHI 7400

[1](#)D. NEW DELHI 7082

[1](#)E. NEW DELHI 6311

[1](#)F. NEW DELHI 5165

[1](#)G. NEW DELHI 4760

[1](#)H. NEW DELHI 4449

[1](#)I. 04 NEW DELHI 4668

[1](#)J. 03 NEW DELHI 6872

Classified By: DCM Robert Blake for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: India enjoys a democratic, multi-religious, multi-cultural, heterogeneous, multi-ethnic society where all major world religions are practiced freely. Isolated elements of religious extremism of many varieties have, however, occurred in India -- notably among Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs -- although extremists as a whole are by far outnumbered by "secular" moderates. In the Indian context, "secularism" is synonymous with tolerance for all faiths, and does not imply life devoid of religion, although religious freedom -- including atheism -- is absolutely protected and guaranteed by the Constitution and a long history of court precedent. At a time when many nations appear to be losing ground to extremist movements, India's trendlines are pointing in the right direction, bolstered by strong indigenous traditions of communal co-habitation, non-violent political protest, a free press, and a realization by politicians that religious hatred is not a vote getter among the increasingly savvy, globalized, and prosperous Indian electorate. Nevertheless, the risk always remains of isolated outbreaks of sectarian violence, especially in response to the terrorism that has plagued India for decades, or when provoked by regional politicians for their narrow political purposes.

[1](#)2. (C) Mission India provides numerous exchange, educational, and outreach programs to counter extremism, primarily through the Front Office, PA, POL, and USAID. Front Office, PA, and POL officers provide critical personal and media interaction to perpetuate the USG message of moderation and tolerance. Our outreach ranges from one-on-one engagement with elites to press interviews to mass-audience interaction to overcome misperceptions and stereotypes. We also monitor and report trends in religious extremism. This cable includes a catalogue of Mission India programs since mid-2004 that are geared to combat religious extremism. End Summary

Assessment of Hindu Chauvinism in India  
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[1](#)3. (S) Hindu chauvinist groups in India include the Rashtriya Shyamsevak Sangh (RSS), Bajrang Dal, and Vishwa Hindu Parishad. Many of their members participate in politics through membership in the center-right Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). These groups propound a belief that India needs to return to its Hindu roots as a reaction to successive historical waves of non-Hindu invasions. Their ideology is summed up as "Hindutva," and has been abused by a few extremist Hindus to justify acts of violence against non-Hindus, although these groups officially reject the use of violence to achieve their social and cultural aim of ensuring equal treatment for Hindus. The worst recent episode of Hindu violence against minority religions occurred in 2002, due to the failure of Gujarat's BJP-run government to protect Muslims from rioting Hindus following an incident in which Hindus died in a train fire which some alleged had been set by Muslims. Hundreds, if not thousands, of Muslims died as a result of the Gujarat government's failure to protect them. As an example of US opposition to extremism, on 21 March 2005, the Ambassador delivered a statement to Indian TV media defending the 18 March decision to revoke the entry visa of Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi, who had overseen state officials' failure to protect Muslims. The statement was prepared by the Embassy's Information Officer in conjunction with the Political Section, the DCM and the Ambassador. To prepare for drafting our official statement, the Political Counselor and IO spoke extensively with media outlets including numerous "live" phone-ins with Indian television stations. The Mission received numerous letters, editorials, and verbal messages supporting this decision, even though the GOI officially sought its retraction.

## Assessment of Islamic Fundamentalism in India

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14. (C) Indian Muslim fundamentalist groups include members of India's Sunni Deobandi sect, which is philosophically linked with Wahabbis such as the Taliban and Usama bin Ladin, and some unaffiliated Maulvis (clerics) who have expressed support for Al-Qa'ida and other brands of Islamic terrorism. We do not have access to the more extreme Wahabhi clerics and supporters of Al-Qa'ida, or to members of the banned Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), which has committed acts of terrorism in the past. The number of extreme Wahabhi clerics is believed to be small, but growing and closely watched by the GOI (see Para 8). (NOTE: The last alleged SIMI terrorist acts were committed in early 2003. End Note.)

15. (C) Our GOI and Indian NGO interlocutors take pride that India possesses the world's largest minority Muslim community while enjoying a near zero rate of indigenous Islamic terrorism. Almost none of India's approximately 130 million Muslims -- a population on par with that of its neighbors Pakistan and Bangladesh -- have been identified as Al-Qa'ida members or affiliates. A small number, however, have provided shelter, intelligence, and/or facilitated cross-border terrorist groups; one recent example was the July 5 attack on the Hindu temple at Ayodhya (Ref F). A larger number hold and publicly espouse extremist views, often to gain political mileage, but stop far short of perpetuating violence to achieve political change.

16. (C) There are any number of theories on how India evolved to have such a large Muslim minority with such a low incidence of extremism. Salman Rushdie, for example, noted that India's secular Constitution affords Muslims legal protection from, and political equality with, the country's large Hindu majority. Furthermore, India's democratic system allows for Muslim participation at all levels (including, at present, President APJ Kalam), and in parts of the country the "Muslim vote bank" is actively courted as a swing electorate. Many Indian Muslims also undoubtedly remember past communal violence, such as in Gujarat in 2002 and during Partition, and steer away from extremism for pragmatic reasons. Moreover, a free and healthy press and a viable, albeit creaky, court system have given ordinary Muslims recourse to broader public opinion whenever intolerant elements or leaders have attempted to sway Muslims toward extremism. Cases in point include the broad outcry after clerics issued fatwas condemning Muslim female tennis star Sania Mirza for playing in normal tennis togs (Ref B) and when religious scholars tried to impose the wearing of the burqa on Muslim women campaigning for elected office.

17. (C) Islamic extremism is by far a minority view even in Jammu & Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state. Political moderates -- including "moderate separatists" -- are ascendant in J&K, and the tide has clearly been moving against political violence for at least a year. Moderate separatists have moved from wanting independence or association with Pakistan, to seeking limited autonomy, "soft borders", and progress on human rights (Ref D). The Political Section has made repeated visits to Kashmir to encourage movement toward moderation in Kashmiri politics.

18. (S) A new area of concern, especially in West Bengal (another state with a proportionately larger Muslim population), is that illegal Bangladeshi migrants are bringing with them to India a radicalized form of Islam that is out of touch with India's primarily moderate religious practices (Ref C). Our contacts there tell us there are a surprising number of Wahabhi-influenced madrassas and mosques in the border areas that appear to have foreign funding.

19. (C) Consulate Mumbai contacts report that there have been increased efforts by both local and foreign groups that are deeply conservative or fundamentalist to strengthen their presence in Mumbai's mosques, schools and social organizations. Most of our contacts tell us that these groups have not made much headway on account of the community's moderate instincts and leanings.

## Assessment of Sikh Radicalism in India

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10. (C) Although the Pakistan-supported Sikh separatist movement produced some of India's worst political violence, Sikh radicalism in India is largely a spent force and Punjabi Sikhs are now more interested in economic success and social development than they are in separatism (Ref E). The spurt in purported Sikh violence last spring (Ref H) appears to have been a last gasp by a group which ultimately had to hire non-Sikhs to conduct operations for cash, because it could not command sufficient support from within the Sikh community. Police forensics rolled up the conspirators and several caches of arms and explosives. Sikhs remain for the most part a law-abiding, service-oriented community. Sikhs serve in the Armed Forces and Police in numbers far out of

proportion to their numbers in the overall community. Army Chief General JJ Singh and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh are both observant Sikhs. Sikhs remain a respected and admired minority community for their devotion and their charity.

#### Mission Outreach

11. (SBU) Senior Mission officers, POL, ECON, PA staff, and senior FSNs in all four India posts meet regularly with a wide spectrum of religious leaders and groups to offer support to moderate thinkers and to help dispel negative, media-driven rumors that attempt to paint the US as an intolerant or even anti-Muslim society. (NOTE: Critics and scare-mongers sometimes try to portray the US as anti-Hindu, but this strain is largely contained to allegations of US-supported missionaries trying to convert Hindus to Christianity. End Note.)

12. (SBU) The Internal Political Reporting Unit in the Political Section in New Delhi is an active participant in the mission's Muslim outreach program and works regularly with USAID and PA in Muslim-oriented programs. We identify moderate Muslim clerics for participation in International Visitor programs, visit madrassas regularly, and provide textbooks and instructional material. Posts sponsor Iftar celebrations during Ramzan (Ramadan) that bring together Muslims with a wide variety of orientations and non-Muslims, who may not otherwise interact on their own -- in each of the past several years the DCM and several CGs among other Mission officers have hosted Iftars.

13. (SBU) In addition, we provide Muslim clerics, political leaders and scholars, including Muslim extremists, with cutting edge research on the growth of a moderate Islamic reform movement. When we engage extremist Muslims in dialogue on a wide variety of issues, we have in some cases won their trust and, as a result, they have approached us for more information or requests on Muslim outreach activities. We have worked with the Front Office to draft speeches on Islamic themes and to refute allegations that the USG is anti-Muslim. When certain Muslim leaders have made statements that appear sympathetic to terrorism, we have called on them and asked them to clarify or withdraw such statements.

14. (SBU) In instances when Hindu extremist groups have published material or made speeches alleging ties between the USG and Christian missionaries or alleging that the USG has a covert program to convert Hindus to Christianity, we have met with their top leadership to refute the allegations and ask that they be withdrawn; POL and PA have also worked together on press releases and editorials refuting these allegations. In our meetings with Hindu extremists we condemn hate speech and violence against minorities. We also refute their attempts to paint Islam as a terrorist religion and our anti-terrorism efforts as anti-Muslim. We categorically reject their attempts to paint the USG as a member of a Hindu/Jewish/Christian alliance against Islam.

#### Promoting Economic Reform to Combat Extremism

15. (SBU) In November 2003, the Mission submitted a Medium-term Economic and Commercial Strategy for promoting economic liberalization, developing closer trade and investment ties with the US, and catalyzing regional integration, a five-year strategy which was approved by Washington and which boosted our successful engagement with India on terrorism (Ref J). We have made excellent progress in implementing the strategy over the ensuing two years. USAID economic growth and social development programs have been a key element of our success because of the link between economics and extremism. There is a growing recognition that successful economic reform and sustained growth and job creation are necessary conditions to maintain stable democratic development and regional stability in the medium term.

#### Mission Publications Reach Wide, Multi-Lingual Audiences

16. (SBU) The Mission has successfully used numerous publications in English, Hindi, Urdu, and regional languages, to inform and shape public perception of USG anti-terrorism policy and activities. This approach allows us to repeatedly combat anti-US perceptions among large and geographically diverse populations. We support the continued and expanded funding of these projects, such as:

-- A grant to the Centre for Study of Society and Secularism (CSSS) in Mumbai allowed them to translate 134,000 copies of the Secular Perspective publications into four regional languages for general distribution.

-- "People, Progress, Partnership: The Transformation of US-India Relations" was a one-time (2004), Mission-wide publication targeting 50,000 elite individuals and

institutions, including key Muslim contacts, and was assessed to be highly effective.

-- "Muslim Life in America" was a one-time, Mission-wide publication targeted at a general audience. This publication has been widely distributed to show how Muslims are an integral part of America's plural society.

17. (SBU) In addition, the Mission has supported the translation and placement of relevant articles from American Press in Hindi and Urdu. For example, on August 11, PA New Delhi's Press Office translated into Hindi the Washington File byliner "Iraq's Compact With America" by US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad. It was used in its entirety in Delhi's leading tabloid "Veer Arjun". On May 13, another Washington File article, "Rice Condemns Alleged Disrespect of Quran at Guantanamo Base," was translated and widely distributed to the Indian media. Five Hindi and five Urdu publications used it. Each article has a short shelf-life, but the effects are long-term when viewed as a regular and ongoing PA program.

18. (SBU) An Urdu edition of PA's SPAN magazine has been in existence since March 2003 and targets Indian Muslims -- 13,000 copies are printed bi-monthly. It is considered a highly effective project and continues to win plaudits and gain subscribers. Magazine content covers themes showing tolerance, pluralism, and multi-culturalism in the US. Reprinted SPAN articles in the Urdu media have had a multiplier effect.

19. (SBU) PA's highly effective book reprint program has, in the past year, allowed us to distribute titles including: "A New Religious America -- How a 'Christian Country' Has Now Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation" by Harvard Professor Diana Eck (who visited India as a US Speaker in 2002); "On Toleration" by Princeton's Michael Walzer; and "Diversity in America" by Yale Law Professor and Fulbright India alumnus Peter H. Schuck. Copies of these and other books have been presented to key Embassy contacts.

20. (SBU) PA in 2005 also participated in the widely-attended Delhi Book Fair (20,000 visitors) and the Urdu Book Fair (targeting Jamia Millia Islamia, India's most prestigious Muslim university, in New Delhi). Both these events promoted the PA products listed above, and we consider them highly effective outreach venues.

#### IVL and Other Exchange Programs Cement Strong Messages

21. (SBU) We have used many of our IVL programs to reinforce and solidify messages of tolerance and moderation by giving Indian elites and up-and-comers an up-close view of US values and living. Multi-week engagements make lasting impressions on participants; we view these as highly effective long-term programs, and they almost always have long-term impact on participants and a multiplier effect among participants' audiences (students, newspaper readers, etc.). These programs should be continued, and, where feasible, expanded. Some of the IVL programs we have supported in the past year include (participation figures are for 2004-05 program cycle):

-- Indo-Pak Sub Regional IVL Programs (on a variety of themes)  
Participation: 4 on 3 programs; Indian and Pakistani participants visit the US together.

-- Religious Education in the US IVL Program for Madrassa Leaders  
Participation: 3 in two programs in 2005. Total all-Mission Indian Muslims participants in this program since 2003: 67.

-- Freedom of the Press IVL Program  
Participation: 5 Kashmiri Journalists (4 Muslims, 1 Hindu)

-- Multi-Culturalism in US Society IVL Program  
Participation: 1 (Muslim)

-- IVL Program on Religious Diversity In America  
Participation: 1

-- Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution IVL Program  
Participation: 1 (Muslim)

-- Combating Terrorist Financial Networks and Money Laundering IVL Program  
Participation: 2

22. (SBU) We also over the past year have promoted other successful exchange programs -- which should also be continued or expanded where possible, including:

-- Summer Institute Program On Religious Pluralism  
Participation: 1

-- Summer Institute Student Leaders Program: Joint

Indo-Pak-Bangladesh Program  
Participation: 4 (all Muslims)

-- Fulbright Summer Institute Program on American Politics  
and Political Thought  
Participation: 1 (Muslim)

-- Fulbright Summer Institute Program on US Political Economy  
and Global Economic System  
Participation: 1 (Muslim)

-- Fulbright Visiting Specialist Program  
Participation: 1 (Muslim)

-- PLUS: Department of State's Partnerships in Learning  
Undergraduate Studies program (administered by USEFI, the  
Indian Fulbright Commission) for young representatives of  
India's Muslim and other disadvantaged communities  
Participation: 2 (Muslims)

-- Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistantship Program  
(for countries with significant Muslim populations)  
Participation: 4

-- South Asia Teacher Training Project (6-week program at  
George Washington University for secondary school English  
language teachers from India and Pakistan)  
Participation: 13

-- YES Program (10 months)  
Participation: 35, including Muslims, all from non-elite  
schools.

-- SIFE Program  
Participation: 16

-- Youth American Summer Institute  
Participation: 1 participant

-- Madrasa Programs  
Participation: 4-10

-- P4L (Partnerships for Learning) Program  
Participation: 3

-- Seeds of Peace  
Participation: Twelve 13-to-15-year old participants each  
year for the last 5 years. Indian and Pakistani students  
spent 3 weeks in Maine and follow-up sessions every two weeks  
till they enroll for their undergraduate programs. Also,  
there have been 3 cross-border home-stays so far. The  
participants and their parents describe the experience as  
"life-changing" and said that it forever altered the way they  
perceive people from the other country

-- South Asia Student Leader Conference in Kathmandu  
Participation: 2

-- ASI Alumni Conference in Dhaka  
Participation: 6

-- Islamic Life In The US/University of Louisville  
Participation: 7. Last year's Indian alumnus, Dr. Zafar  
Mahmood, is Officer on Special Duty with the Prime Minister's  
Committee looking into the social, economic and educational  
status of the Muslim community in India.

-- Indian Journalists Sent to Afghanistan  
Participation: 10 Indian journalists. Resulting coverage was  
positive and helped Indian audiences understand Afghanistan's  
progress towards democracy.

#### Education- and Madrasa-Specific Programs -----

123. (SBU) The Mission promotes several programs that target  
educational institutions, including Indian madrassas. These  
programs reach educators -- many of whom are themselves  
politically influential -- as well as students, who are  
otherwise exposed to numerous ideologies, including extremist  
messages, and are bombarded with conflicting images and  
impressions of the US. We address their questions -- largely  
focused on Iraq, Iran, and the status of Muslims in America  
-- and reiterate America's commitment to religious freedom.  
Madrassas and Islamic universities continue to welcome FSOs  
and other American speakers, which indicates to us that the  
interaction is working.

124. (SBU) Chennai's ACCESS Microscholarship Program funds  
two years of English language training for 60 Muslim students  
at the Anjuman-e-Himayath-e-Islam School (all destitute  
and/or orphaned). After eight months, the students' language  
ability and overall academic confidence have risen markedly.  
In mid-September, a State Department ACCESS consultant said  
it was the most successful ACCESS program she had seen.  
Consulate Chennai has hosted these students at Post library,  
film screenings, and a local art gallery. This school is



held up as a model for the ACCESS program. The New Delhi ACCESS Microscholarship Program targets 100 high school students at the Jamia Millia Islamia. During the mid-point certificate ceremony, the Charg also announced the expansion of the program in the coming months and the donation of 65 books and audiocassettes on English Language Teaching.

125. (SBU) USAID's Madrassa Quality Education Improvement Program reaches approximately 1,000 students in 18 madrassas in Andhara Pradesh state. (NOTE: The program started with three madrassas. End Note) A Hyderabad-based secular NGO implements this program to introduce secular education in these Madrassas consistent with state school curricula. A new contract is being negotiated to provide life skills, academic, career, and English language training to Muslim adolescent school drop-outs. Recent visits show high attendance, good participation, and rising enrollment rates, especially for girls.

126. (SBU) The DCM during his July 2004 visit to the Jamiah Salafiah Madrassa, one of the most important madrassas in Varanasi, address hundreds of students and faculty on the topic of America's multi-religious and multi-cultural population. He also donated an English as a Second Language book collection to the madrassa, the first of a series of book donations to be made to Indian madrassas, and was interviewed on a popular Urdu television channel with a primarily Muslim viewership of approximately one million people (Ref I). The DCM and Poloff visited the Darul-Uloom Seminary in Deoband in September 2004 to engage the seminarians on issues of concern and donate a US book collection to their library. (NOTE: The seminary is one of India's premier Islamic institutions and the center of Deobandi Islam. End Note.) The visit was covered by two television networks and eight print journalists, and concluded with a press conference.

127. (SBU) English language training helps students and drop-outs develop job-related skills, which can redirect otherwise marginalized individuals into the mainstream. The Senior English Language Fellow for North India (Lucknow) has been selected and awaits her visa to begin her program here. In July, the Regional English Language Officer joined Post, giving South Asia its first RELO.

128. (SBU) Other Mission-wide madrassa outreach programs include seminars, lectures and exchanges on aspects of madrassa education -- including introducing modern curricula -- and on Islam and religious education in the US.

129. (SBU) Book donations garner goodwill and help us shape political messages and impressions. Among frequent book donations to universities and schools, with special emphasis on Muslim institutions, the Mission in 2005 donated books worth \$30,000 to Jammu University's central library and to the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies in Jammu. Separately, Consulate Mumbai distributed educational books to eight Madrassas and Urdu academies in 2004-5, including ESL books.

#### Promoting Tolerance Through Lectures, DVCs, Conferences

130. (SBU) Speaker programs at universities and other venues, including Muslim universities, have covered MPP themes including counter-terrorism, bilateral relations, American art and literature, environmental issues, political processes, women's equity, human rights, the role of the media, and HIV/AIDS. Speakers at undergraduate schools have talked on art and literature, tolerance and multi-culturalism in the US. Although individual speakers only visit India for a few weeks at a time, taken as a whole, they represent a long-term investment in educating important segments of the Indian population on how America's multi-cultural, multi-religious society functions. Prominent lectures, DVCs, conferences, and other direct, two-way interactions include:

-- USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios's October 2004 Lucknow Visit included a roundtable meeting with Muslim leaders and academics.

-- The DCM talked to Urdu editors on Muslim issues regarding detainees at Guantanamo Bay in New Delhi and with Muslim leaders in Mumbai.

-- PAO Mumbai conducted lectures on Muslim life in America.

-- PA Mumbai held book discussions at University of Pune "On Toleration" (a title under the PA Book Reprint Program, see above).

-- A DVC discussion on US policy in Iran and IAEA concerns over proliferation, featured US Ambassador to the UN in Vienna Greg Schulte and eight Indian security analysts.

-- Dr. Christine Fair, a researcher at the US Institute of Peace, conducted a two-week program on aspects of terrorism

and extremism.

-- Davison College Professor Brenda Flanagan talked with faculty and students at Jamia Millia Islamia on "Multi-Culturalism in American Literature."

-- Arizona State University Professor Robin Haarr talked with students and faculty at universities in Chandigarh and Kurukshetra and to police officers, activists and grassroots workers on the topic of "Gender Justice and Violence Against Women."

-- Boston University Professor Hillel Levine spoke with Madrassa leaders in Varanasi and at Jamia Millia Islamia on non-violent conflict resolution.

-- Culture Connect Ambassador Daniel Libeskind presented a program to Jamia Millia Islamia students and faculty on 9/11-related issues, achieving success in America as an immigrant, and his conceptualization of a new building for the WTC site.

-- Senior Indian journalist M.J. Akbar participated in our book reading and panel discussion on Pamela Constable's book "Fragments of Grace: My Search for Humanity from Kashmir to Kabul."

-- We held conferences on "Civil Society, Multi-Cultural Democracies, and the Media" at Islamic institutions in Lucknow and Jaipur.

-- Mary Washington College Professor Stephen Farnsworth gave a lecture on American Muslims in US Presidential Elections to Jamia Millia Islamia and the Institute of Objective Studies, a Muslim think-tank.

-- Consulate Mumbai held well-received DVC programs on Cyber Terrorism and plans to do so in the future.

#### Other Programs

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31. (SBU) USAID, through American NGO IFES, has since May 2005 conducted the Muslim Women's Initiative. The program, part of the Mission's gender and law program, will extend at least to September 2007 (and possibly beyond) in selected districts of Karnataka state, including Bangalore. The program goal is to increase Muslim women's awareness and assertion of their rights under Islam and Indian law; the first phase targets 7,500 primary beneficiaries and 22,500 indirect beneficiaries. The program also enlists Indian NGOs to provide legal aid and counseling services. Muslim Personal Law Boards in nearby districts are asking the NGOs to provide similar services in their areas. This initiative will branch out into Rajasthan state in November, and is expected to grow to other states if Mission expands its overall gender and law program after FY2007. IFES will help Muslim women's groups coordinate advocacy to reform harmful interpretations of religious law (including aspects of divorce law) starting this autumn. Empowering women by educating them on their legal rights will create a bulwark against their potential abuse from authority figures, including their husbands.

32. (SBU) USAID, through a USAID contractor, is conducting a Cross-Cutting Agra Program (CAP, August 2005 - March 2007). Agra's 1.2 million people and significant Muslim population are growing at twice the national average. This program targets young people from poor and marginalized communities who are at risk to be both victims and perpetrators of violence. CAP's goal is to empower Agra youth into taking an active role in city development, slum upgrading, reviving lesser-known monuments, and employing youth (especially girls) in local tourism and other economic sectors.

33. (SBU) USAID is also conducting a major assessment of workforce development needs for the most vulnerable segments of society, especially adolescent school drop-outs, and within that Muslim youth will be a particular focus.

34. (SBU) PA's small grant to an Indian think-tank, the Institute of Social Sciences (ISS), fostered a cross-border exchange between Indians and Pakistanis and prompted meaningful discussions on local governance and democracy. The institute's report entitled "Indian Local Government Delegation in Pakistan - Ambassadors of Peace" details the March 2005 visit to Pakistan of 33 local government representatives from 18 Indian states (Ref G). Both the 15-day visit and the published report were funded in large part by PA in cooperation with ISS and a partner NGO in Pakistan.

35. (SBU) CAO held a ground-breaking visit to Jammu in June 2005, effectively opening Jammu's door to future programming and making the task of East Carolina University representatives easier for their September visit to

University of Jammu to promote a web-based virtual classroom project funded by ECA.

136. (SBU) Culture Connect envoys and former Georgetown University basketball players Omari Faulkner and Courtland Freeman gave workshops in schools and participated in the sports week of Jamia Hamdard, one of Delhi's largest Muslim universities, in October 2004.

137. (SBU) SPAN Magazine (see above) ushered traditional Hindi and Urdu poetry gatherings into the digital age with the American Center's first ever Mushaira (Urdu) and Kavi Sammelan (Hindi) held via digital video conference in June 2005 before a live audience. The DVC, which featured Indian poets in New Delhi and American poets in Washington, highlighted the cultural diversity that is enjoyed by both the United States and India.

138. (SBU) IO regularly organizes video and film screenings at the American Center. Recent videos have included "Thomas L. Friedman Reporting: Searching for the Roots of 9/11" and "Covering Catastrophe," which were shown to several groups in 2004 and 2005.

139. (SBU) Honoring the fourth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, PA in September 2005 hosted a 9/11 paper show and book display in the American Center, New Delhi. The paper show was also shown at the New Delhi "World Anti-Terrorism Day" event, where the Embassy's speaker outlined how the US assists and supports other countries in combating terrorism and extremism.

140. (SBU) Pol/Econ Chennai holds an annual roundtable where Hindu, Muslim, and Christian religious leaders meet to discuss issues of mutual interest.

141. (SBU) An Urdu-language panel discussion on "Urdu in the American Media," held in New Delhi in March 2005, featured CAO as moderator for three US "target of opportunity" speakers who were in India to attend an earlier conference: Ms. Naiyara Jahan (fiction writer and head of "Urdu Markaz" newspaper in Los Angeles); Mr. Khalil-ur-Rahman (editor for "Daily Urdu Times" in New York); and Dr. Wakil Ansari (New York-based physician and columnist for "Daily Urdu Times").

142. (SBU) Poloff in New Delhi met frequently over the past year with a group of high school students who were creating an Internet site -- [www.effortsunited.com](http://www.effortsunited.com) -- on the causes and consequences of global violence. The site won the State Department's "Doorways to Diplomacy" contest in June 2005. After the winner was announced, the DCM held a media event with the students, to encourage and publicize their efforts.

#### Outreach to Other Minority Groups

143. (SBU) CAO inaugurated the first International Summer School for Jain Studies, a new summer school for American college students on the Jain religion, in June 2005. CAO served as the Chief Guest at the valedictory of the school on July 31, 2005. PA's presence at these events underlined US support for freedom of religion, expression, tolerance and scholarly endeavor.

144. (SBU) On September 11, 2005, CPAO visited New Delhi's historic and revered Bangla Sahib Gurdwara (Sikh place of worship) to address a special Sikh prayer service in memory of the victims of Hurricane Katrina and the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the US. Addressing a gathering of over 1,000 Sikh devotees, he thanked the Sikh community for its prayers, moral support and contributions. This interaction and outreach took on special significance in the context of the misinformed and unfortunate backlash against Sikhs after 9/11 in some American cities.

#### Indian NGOs: Partners and Resources

145. (SBU) We interact regularly with a cross-section of NGOs, both religious and secular, that encourage inter-faith dialogue, secularism, and actively counter religious extremism of all kinds, as well as providing material comfort to victims of hate crimes. We ensure these NGO leaders participate in the IV program; USAID and PA ensure that they have access to USG funding. We express our support by visibly attending their public events. We make sure that their information on the activities of extremists is included in the Human Rights Report and the Religious Freedom Report.

146. (C) State and local governments in western India have a complicated relationship with NGOs working on human rights issues and on religious tolerance. NGOs often criticize state bodies for not doing enough to deal with extremism. In Gujarat in particular, NGOs have pointed out just how widespread the state was involved in the fueling of the 2002 riots and how it has failed to bring those responsible to



justice. We tend to support such NGO views on Gujarat. NGOs also report that the Gujarat state government is actively working against them, using a variety of legal means such as tax laws as well as political harassment. The state government's activities in Gujarat have not contributed to a healing of communal wounds that were incurred in 2002, and in fact may be making extremist views more popular among frustrated and scared Muslims in Gujarat, if many of our contacts are to be believed. Still, in our view the vast majority of Gujarat Muslims are as tolerant and moderate as most Muslims elsewhere in India.

147. (SBU) We interact with many NGOs that focus on combating extremism. Among those we meet with on a regular basis are the following:

-- South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre: a network of individuals that investigates, documents, and disseminates information on human rights protections and violations ([www.hrdc.net/sahrdc](http://www.hrdc.net/sahrdc))

-- Asian Centre for Human Rights: promotes human rights throughout Asia ([www.achrweb.org](http://www.achrweb.org))

-- Centre for Social Research: leading women's rights organization ([www.csrindia.org](http://www.csrindia.org))

-- Druk National Congress: promotes human rights in Bhutan ([www.bhutandnc.com](http://www.bhutandnc.com))

-- Institute for Conflict Management Studies: leading think-tank on the causes and ideologies of terrorism and extremism ([www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org))

-- Center for Study of Society and Secularism: promotes secularism and inter-faith dialogue ([www.csss-isla.com](http://www.csss-isla.com))

-- Citizens for Justice and Peace: uses the Indian legal system to enforce India's laws on secular tolerance and anti-communalism ([www.sabrang.com](http://www.sabrang.com))

-- Society for the Promotion of Rational Thinking: promotes communal harmony in a state that was rocked by communal violence in 2002 and where reconciliation and justice have still not been achieved ([www.mysprat.org](http://www.mysprat.org))

148. (U) Visit New Delhi's Classified Website:  
(<http://www.state.sgov/p/sa/newdelhi>)  
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